

MILES CITY RMP REVISION

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

The Miles City Field Office is revising and combining the Big Dry and Powder River resource management plans (RMPs) into one: the Miles City RMP. Prior to 1998, the field office operated under two resource areas -- Big Dry and Powder River -- and the lands in each area are currently managed under their own RMPs.

The Big Dry RMP area consists of about 1.7 million acres of BLM-administered surface acres and 7.6 million acres of BLM-administered mineral resources. It encompasses public lands in 13 counties in eastern Montana: Carter, Custer, Daniels, Dawson, Fallon, Garfield, McCone, Prairie, Richland, Roosevelt, Rosebud, Sheridan and Wibaux. The Powder River RMP area consists of about 1.1 million surface acres of land and 4.1 million acres of subsurface minerals. It includes portions of Custer, Carter, Rosebud and Big Horn counties and all of Powder River and Treasure counties.

ISSUE:

The BLM published a Federal Register notice on February 4, 2005, announcing its intent to plan and conduct public scoping for the RMP. Following issuance of a draft SEIS/Amendment for a 90-day public review and the final SEIS/Amendment for a 30-day protest period, BLM anticipates the Record of Decision to be issued in December 2007.

About 200 people attended nine meetings throughout southeastern Montana. Issues identified include impacts from oil and gas exploration and development; lands and realty management (access); travel management and ownership consolidation; vegetation (noxious weeds); livestock grazing; fire management; off-highway vehicles; socioeconomics; and wildlife management.

One Native American tribe and several local, state and federal agencies are designated cooperating agencies in the preparation of the RMP: Lower Brule Sioux Tribe; Big Horn, Custer, Daniels, Powder River, Richland, Rosebud, Sheridan, and Treasure counties; Carter, Garfield, McCone, Prairie, Richland, and Wibaux county conservation districts; Prairie County Cooperative State Grazing District; Little Beaver Conservation District; Montana Department of Environmental Quality; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; Bureau of Indian Affairs; and Environmental Protection Agency.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

The changes that have taken place in the past 10 to 20 years have resulted in different users and uses of public lands. Issues have emerged that relate to potential threatened and endangered species, increased demand for oil and gas, and changes in intensity of use of other resources. The public lands and resources need to be managed consistently throughout the Miles City Field Office. The RMP will allow BLM to guide management actions based on current information (changes in policy and guidance), sound criteria and public input and provide a comprehensive framework for managing and allocating use of the public lands and resources in the MCFO.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

The overall objective of the Miles City planning effort is to provide a collaborative community-based planning approach to assist the BLM in updating the existing management decisions and resource allocations by addressing new data, changing resource conditions, changes in the use of public land that have occurred since the RMPs were completed, BLM planning instruction memorandums and bulletins. The BLM expects that numerous cooperating agencies and collaborators will continue to become involved in this process and will assist in providing a wide variety of data in support of this effort.

CONTACT:

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